

Nan of Music Mountain

By FRANK H. SPEARMAN

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DARING IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE, DE SPAIN TELLS NAN THAT SOME DAY HE AND SHE WILL BE MARRIED—SHE DOESN'T LIKE IT.

Henry De Spain, general manager of the stage coach line running from the Thief River mines to Sleepy Cat, a railroad division town in the Rocky Mountains, is trying to rid the region of a band of horse thieves, cattle rustlers and gunmen known as the Morgan gang. They live in Morgan Gap, a fertile valley 20 miles from Sleepy Cat and near Calabasas where the coach horses are changed. De Spain has killed two of the gang and has been seriously wounded. Pretty Nan Morgan, niece of the gang leader, has saved his life and he is trying to make love to her, but receives no encouragement.

CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

"Take me away, Gale," cried Nan. "Leave him here—take me home! Take me home!"

She caught her cousin's arm. "Stay right where you are," shouted Morgan, pointing at De Spain, and following Nan as she pulled him along. "When I come back, I'll give you what you're looking for."

"Bring your friends," said De Spain caustically. "I'll accommodate four more of you. Stop!" With one hand still on his revolver, he pointed the way. "Go down that trail first, Morgan. Stay where you are, girl, till he gets down that hill. You won't get me over her shoulder for a while yet. Move!"

Morgan took the path sullenly. De Spain covering every step he took. Behind De Spain Nan stood waiting for her cousin to get beyond earshot. "What," she whispered hurriedly to De Spain, "will you do?"

Covering Morgan, who could whirl on him at any turn in the descent, De Spain could not look at her in answering. "Looks pretty rocky, doesn't it?"

"He will start the whole gap as soon as he gets to his horse." He looked at the darkening sky. "They won't be very active on the job before morning."

Morgan was at a safe distance. De Spain turned to Nan. Her eyes were bent on him as if he would pierce him through. "If I save your life," still breathing fast, she hesitated for words—"you won't trick me—ever—will you?"

Steadily returning her appealing gaze, De Spain answered with deliberation: "Don't ever give me a chance to trick you, Nan."

"What do you mean?" she demanded, fear and distrust burning in her tone.

"My life," he said slowly, "isn't worth it."

"You know—," He could see her resolute underlip, pink with fresh young blood, quiver with intensity of feeling as she faltered. "You know what every man says of every girl—foolish, trusting, easy to deceive—everything like that."

"May God wither my tongue before ever I speak to deceive you, Nan."

"There's not a moment to lose," she said swiftly. "Listen: a trail around this mountain leads out of the gap, straight across the face of El Capitán."

"I can make it."

"A good climber can do it—I have done it. I'd even go with you, if I could."

"Why?"

She shook her head angrily at what he dared show in his eyes. "Oh, keep still—listen!"

"I know you'd go, Nan," he declared unperturbed. "But, believe me, I never would let you."

"I can't go, because to do any good I must meet you with a horse outside."

He only looked silently at her, and she turned her eyes from his gaze. "See," she said, taking him eagerly to the back of the ledge and pointing. "Follow that trail, the one to the east—you can't get lost; you can reach El Capitán before dark—it's a very close, creep carefully across El Capitán on that narrow trail, and on the other side there is a wide one clear down to the road—oh, do be careful on El Capitán!"

"I'll be careful."

"I must watch my chance to get away from the corral with a horse. If I fall it will be because I am locked up at home, and you must hide and do the best you can. How much they will surprise of this, I don't know."

"Go now, this minute," he said, restraining his words. "If you don't come, I shall know why."

She turned without speaking, and fearless as a chamois, ran down the rocks. De Spain, losing not a moment, hobbled rapidly up along the granite-walled passage that led the way to his chance for life.

CHAPTER XIV.

A Venture in the Dark.

Pushing his way hastily forward when he could make haste; crawling slowly on his hands and knees when held by opposing rocks; flattening himself like a leech against the face of the precipice when the narrowing ledge left him only inches under foot; clinging with torn hands to every favorable crevice, and pausing when the peril was extreme for fresh strength, De Spain dragged his injured foot across the sheer face of El Capitán in the last shadows of the day's falling light.

Spent by his effort, De Spain reached the rendezvous Nan had indicated, as nearly as the stars would tell him, by ten o'clock. It was only after a long and anxious hour that he heard the faintest sounds of a horse. He stood motionless, waiting for the smaller trees up

til he could distinguish the outlines of the animal, and his eye caught the figure of the rider.

De Spain stepped out of the trees, and, moving toward Nan, caught her hand and helped her to the ground.

She enjoined silence, and led the horse into the little grove. Stopping well within it, she stooped and began rearranging the muffers on the horse's head.

"I'm afraid I'm too late," she said. "How long have you been here?" She faced De Spain with one hand on the horse's shoulder.

"Did you have any fall?"

"You see I'm here. You! How could you get here at all with a horse?"

"They are hiding on both trails outside watching for you—and the moon will be up—," She seemed very anxious. De Spain made light of her fears. "I'll get past them—I've got to, Nan. Don't give it a thought."

"I don't know what you'll think of me—," He heard the troubled note in her voice.

"What do you mean?"

She began to unbuckle her jacket. Throwing back the revers, she felt inside around her waist, unfastened after a moment and drew forth a leather strap. She laid it in De Spain's hands. "This is yours," she said in a whisper.

He felt it questioningly, hurriedly, then with amazement. "Not a cartridge belt!" he exclaimed. "It's your own."

"Where—?" She made no answer. "Where did you get it, Nan?" he whispered hurriedly.

"Where you left it."

"How?" She was silent. "When?"

"Tonight."

"Have you been to Calabasas and back tonight?"

"Everybody but Sassoon is in the chase," she replied uneasily—as if not knowing what to say, or how to say it. "They said you should never leave the gap alive—they are ready with traps everywhere. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't bear—after what you did for me tonight—to think of your being shot down like a dog, when you were only trying to get away."

"I wouldn't have had you take a ride like that for forty belts!"

"McAlpin showed it to me the last time I was at the stage barn, hanging where you left it." He strapped the cartridges around him.

"You should never have taken that ride for it. But since you have—," He had drawn his revolver from his

waistband. He broke it now and held it out. "Load it for me, Nan."

"What do you mean?"

"Put four more cartridges in it yourself. Except for your cartridge, the gun is empty. When you do that you will know none of them ever will use against your own except to protect my life. And if you have any among them whose life ought to come ahead of mine—name him, or them, now. Do as I tell you—load the gun."

He took hold of her hands and, in spite of her refusal, made her do his will. He guided her hand to draw the cartridges, one after another, from his belt, and waited for her to slip them in the darkness into the empty cylinder, to close the breech, and hand the gun back.

"Now, Nan," he said, "you know me. You may have doubts—they will all die. You will hear many stories about me—but you will say: 'I put the cartridges in his revolver with my own hands, and I know he won't abuse the means of defense I gave him myself.' There can never be any real doubts or misunderstandings between us again, Nan."

He waited for her to speak, but she remained silent.

"You have given me my life, my defense," he continued, passing from a subject that he perceived was better

left untouched. "Who is nearest and dearest to you at home?"

"My Uncle Duke."

"Then I never will raise a hand against your Uncle Duke. And this man, tonight—this cousin—Gale? Nan, what is that man?"

"I hate him."

"Thank God! So do I!"

"But he is a cousin."

"Then I suppose he must be one of mine."

"Unless he tries to kill you."

"He won't be very long in trying that. And now, what about yourself? What have you got to defend yourself against him, and against every other drunken man?"

She laid her own pistol without a word in De Spain's hand. He felt it, opened, closed, and gave it back. "That's a good defender—when it's in reach. When it's at home it's a poor one."

"It will never be at home again except when I am."

"Shall I tell you a secret?"

"What is it?" asked Nan unsuspectingly.

"We are engaged to be married."

She sprang from him like a deer. "It's a dead secret," he said gravely; "no body knows it yet—not even you."

"You need never talk again like that if you want to be friends with me," she said indignantly. "I hate it."

"Hate it if you will; it's so. And it began when you handed me that little bit of lead and brass on the mountain tonight, to defend your life and mine."

"I'll hate you if you persecute me the way Gale does. The moon is almost up. You must go."

"You haven't told me," he persisted, "how you got away at all." They had walked out of the trees. He looked reluctantly to the east. "Tell me and I'll go," he promised.

"After I went up to my room I waited till the house was all quiet. Then I started for Calabasas. When I came back I got up to my room without being seen, and sat at the window a long time. I waited till all the men stopped riding past. Then I climbed through the window and down the kitchen roof, and let myself down to the ground. Some more men came past, and I hid on the porch and slipped over to the horse barn and found a hackamore, and went down to the corral and hunted around till I found this little pistol—she's the best to ride bareback."

"I could ride a razorback—why take all that trouble for me?"

"If you don't start while you have a chance, you undo everything I have tried to do to avoid a fight."

The wind, stirring softly, set the aspens leaves quivering. The stars, chilled in the thin, clear night air, hung diamondlike in the heavens and the eastern sky across the distant desert paled for the rising moon. The two, standing at the horse's head, listened a moment together in the darkness. De Spain, leaning forward, said something in a low, laughing voice. Nan made no answer. Then, bending, he took her hand and, before she could release it, caught it up to his lips.

For a long time after he had gone she stood, listening for a shot—wondering, breathless at moments, whether he could get past the waiting traps. De Spain, true to all she had ever heard of his Indianlike stealth, had left her side unabashed and unafraid—living, laughing, paying bold court to her even when she stubbornly refused to be courted—and had made himself in the twinkling of an eye a part of the silence beyond—the silence of the night, the wind, the stars, the waste of sand, and of all the mystery that brooded upon it. She would have welcomed, in her keen suspense, a sound of some kind, some reminder that he yet lived and could yet laugh; none came.

Day was breaking when the night boss, standing in the doorway at the Calabasas barn, saw a horseman riding at a leisurely pace up the Thief River road. The barnman scrutinized the approaching stranger closely. There was something strange and something familiar in the outlines of the figure. But when the night rider had dismounted in front of the barn-door, turned his horse loose, and, limping stiffly walked forward on foot, the man rubbed his eyes hard before he could believe them. Then he uttered an incredulous greeting and led Henry De Spain into the barn office.

"There's friends of yours in your room upstairs right now," he declared, bulging with shock. De Spain, sitting down, forbade the barnman to disturb them, only asking who they were.

When he had asked half a dozen more leisurely questions and avoided answering twice as many, the barnman at De Spain's request helped him upstairs. Beside himself with excitement, the night boss turned, grinning, as he laid one hand on the doorknob and the other on De Spain's shoulder.

"You couldn't have come," he whispered loudly, "at a better time."

The entryway was dark, and from the silence within the room one might have thought its occupants, if there were such, wrapped in slumber. But at intervals a faint clicking sound could be heard. The night man threw open the door. By the light of two stage-lamps, one set on the dresser and the other on a window ledge, four men sat about a rickety table in a voice and death struggle at cards. No voice broke the tense silence, not even when the door was thrown broadly open.

No one—neither Lefever, Scott, Frank Elspaso nor McAlpin—looked up when De Spain walked into the room and, with the night man's lighted candle, advanced composedly toward the

group. Even then his presence would have passed unnoticed, but that Bob Scott's ear mechanically recorded the limping step and transmitted to his trained intelligence merely notice of something unusual.

Scott, picking up his cards one at a time as Lefever dealt, raised his eyes. Startling at the sight of the man given up for dead must have been, no muscle of Bob Scott's body moved. His expression of surprise slowly dissolved into a grin that metely invited the others, as he had found out for himself, to find out for themselves.

Lefever finished his deal, threw down the pack, and picked up his hand. His suspicious eyes never rose above the level of the faces at the table; but when he had thumbed his cards and looked from one to the other of the remaining players to read the weather signals, he perceived on Scott's face an unwonted expression, and looked to where the scout's gaze was turned for an explanation of it. Lefever's own eyes, at the sight of the thinned, familiar face behind Elspaso's chair, starting, opened like full moons. The big fellow spread one hand out, his cards hidden within it, and with the other hand prudently drew down his pile of chips. "Gentlemen," he said lightly, "this game is interned."

He rose and put a silent hand across the table over Elspaso's shoulder. "Henry," he exclaimed impassively, "one question, if you please—and only one: How in thunder did you do it?"

CHAPTER XV.

Strategy.

One week went to repairs. To a man of action such a week is longer than ten years of service. But chained to a bed in the Sleepy Cat hospital, De Spain had no escape from one week of thinking, and for that week he thought about Nan Morgan. And the impulse that moved him the first moment he could get out of bed and into a saddle was to spur his way hard and fast to make her, against a score of burly cousins, his own; and never to release her from his sudden arms again.

With De Spain to think was to do; at least to do something, but not without further careful thinking, and not without anticipating every chance of failure. And his manner was to cast up all difficulties and obstacles in a situation, brush them aside, and have his will if the heavens fell; and he now set himself, while doing his routine work every day, to do one particular thing—to see, talk to, plead with, struggle with the woman, or girl, rather—child, even, to his thoughts, so fragile she was—this girl who had given him back his life against her own marauding relatives.

His friends saw that something was absorbing him in an unusual, even an extraordinary way, yet none could arrive at a certain conclusion as to what it was. The one man in the country who could have surmised the situation between the two—the barn boss, McAlpin—if he entertained suspicions, was far too pawky to share them with anyone.

When two weeks had passed without De Spain's having seen Nan or having heard of her being seen, the conclusion urged itself on him that she was either ill or in trouble—perhaps in trouble for helping him; a moment later he was laying plans to get into the gap to find out.

Nothing in the way of a venture could be more foolhardy—this he admitted to himself—nothing, he consoled himself by reflecting, but something stronger than danger could justify it. Of all the motley Morgan following within the mountain fastness he could count on but one man to help him in the slightest degree—this was the derelict, Bull Page. There was no choice but to use him, and he was easily enlisted for the Calabasas affair had made a heroic figure of De Spain in the barnrooms. De Spain, accordingly, lay in wait for the old man and intercepted him one day on the road to Sleepy Cat, walking the twenty miles patiently for his whisky.

"You must be the only man in the gap, Bull, that can't borrow or steal a horse to ride," remarked De Spain, stopping him near the river bridge.

Page pushed back the broken brim of his hat and looked up. "You wouldn't believe it," he said, imparting a cheerful confidence, "but ten years ago I had horses to lend to every man 'tween here and Thief river."

He nodded toward Sleepy Cat with a wrecked smile, and by a dramatic chance the broken hat-brim fell with the words: "They've got 'em all."

"Your fault, Bull."

"Say!" Up went the broken brim, and the whiskied face lighted with a shaking smile, "you turned some trick on that Calabasas crew—some fight," Bull chuckled.

"Bull is old Duke Morgan a Republican?"

Bull looked surprised at the turn of De Spain's question, but answered in good faith: "Duke votes 'most any ticket that's again the railroad."

"How about picking a couple of good barnmen over in the gap, Bull?"

"What kind of a job 'y' got?"

"See McAlpin the next time you're over at Calabasas. How 'bout that girl that lives with Duke?"

Bull's face lighted. "Nan! Say! she's a little hummer!"

"I hear she's gone down to Thief river, teaching school."

"Come by Duke's less'n three hours ago. Seen her in the kitchen makin' bread."

"They're looking for a schoolteacher down there, anyway. Much sickness in the gap lately, Bull?"

"O'y sickness I knowed lately is what you're responsible for 'y'self," replied Bull with a grin. "Why 'y' got any chips at all from that Calabasas job, eh?"

"See McAlpin, Bull, next time you're over Calabasas way. Here—," De Spain drew some currency from his pocket and handed a bill to Page. "Go get your hair cut. Don't talk too much—wear your whiskers long and your tongue short."

"Right-o!"

"You understand."

"Take it from old Bull Page, he's a world's wonder of a sucker, but he knows his friends."

"But remember this—you don't know me. If anybody knows you for a friend of mine, you are no good to me. See?"

Bull was beyond expressing his comprehension in words alone. He winked, nodded, and screwed his face into a thousand wrinkles. De Spain, wheeling, rode away, the old man blinking first after him, and then at the money in his hand. He didn't profess to understand everything in the high country, but he could still distinguish the principal figures at the end of a bank-note. When he tramped to Calabasas the next day to interview McAlpin he



Ten Years Ago I Had Horses to Lend Every Man 'Tween Here and Thief River.

received more advice, with a strong burr, about keeping his own counsel, and a little expense money to run him until an opening presented itself on the pay roll.

Come one of the big moments in the life of Henry De Spain and Nan Morgan. You will want to read about it in the next installment—great stuff!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CAUGHT OSPREY IN FISHLINE

Remarkable Feat That Is Credited to a Member of the New York Fire Department.

How a fisherman lassoed and captured an osprey, or fishhawk, with a hand fishline, is told by a correspondent of the New York Sun. A number of fishermen were on board, he says, and we were anchored with lines out in every direction. I was fishing from the starboard side of the top deck, near the stern, when suddenly I made a dive for a barge that was floating on the water a short distance from the boat, between two lines, but nearer the line of Mr. John Woods of the New York fire department.

Mr. Woods tried playfully to throw his line over the bird, and somehow he actually succeeded in looping the line round its left wing in such a manner that it could not escape.

The books did not catch at all, for they were far beyond, but the osprey was securely lassoed. It was at once an exciting and a ludicrous task to reel in the big bird. It struggled desperately, and had it not been for the length of line beyond it, with a tenacious sinker at the end, it might have been necessary to reel it down from the sky instead of up from the sea. When it was brought to the deck and found itself in the strong but not unkind hands of a group of fishermen, it seemed frightened, angry and disgusted; but, strange to say, it did not fight its captors.

Someone suggested killing it, and one man urged sending it to an aviary; but above all the other voices I heard a self-appointed counsel for the prisoner, pleading for its liberty with an oratory effective if not classical: "Aw, let the poor fellow go!" And so, on reflection, saved the jury.

When the bird was set at liberty, none the worse for its strange adventure, it shot straight down among the lines again, got the barge it started out to get, and then leisurely flew away.

Kidnaps Being Educated.

Education is well along with the eskimos in Alaska, for there are now 77 schools for their use, with an enrollment of 8,568, in addition to 100 teachers, 11 physicians, nine nurses, and three hospital attendants. The native villages are divided up into five districts, with about fifteen schools to the district. The first school for eskimos in Alaska was established as early as 1885 at the little village of Wrangell.

He Was Deaf.

A foreign chauffeur driving outside far into the country ran out of gasoline, but chanced to meet a farmer who was deaf.

"Tell me, please," asked the chauffeur, "where I can get some gasoline. Der automobile has stopped already."

"Hey!" said the farmer, putting his hand to his ear.

"Himmel!" cried the chauffeur, "Not hay. Gasoline. Dis was a modern car, nod a horse."

Peaceful Conscience Best.

The accumulating of a substantial fortune can make a prosperous man, but not necessarily a happy one; a peaceful conscience is the true content, and wealth is but her golden ornament.

BURGLARS TURN ABILITIES TO USE

Italian Thieves Become Spies and Win Redemption From Government.

GET VALUABLE PAPERS

Deliver to Their Government All the Documents of the Austro-Hungarian Espionage Bureau at Zurich.

Geneva. — A French-Swiss paper gives the following version of a sensational incident which has been told in several forms:

Recently, two elegantly dressed men, carrying a heavy satchel, appeared at the office of the Italian general staff in Rome and demanded an audience with the chief of the intelligence department. When they were received by this official they made sensational disclosures and delivered all the documents of the Austro-Hungarian espionage bureau in Zurich.

The men were two notorious Italian burglars, who were known and feared from one end of the kingdom to the other. When the war broke out they were called to the colors and detailed to the same regiment. Life in the trenches did not suit them and they decided to desert. They escaped to Switzerland and settled in Zurich, where they plied their old trade with considerable success.

Turn Abilities to Use.

Regretting their desertion, the burglars decided to use their abilities in the interest of their country by "cleaning out" the Austro-Hungarian espionage bureau in the Zurich consulate of the dual monarchy. Accidentally they made the acquaintance of a former officer of the Italian navy, who had been cashiered many years before, and after an adventurous life in many countries, had entered the service of Austria as a spy.

From this man the two men obtained detailed plans of the offices of the consulate, and after a thorough preparation they carried out their raid on the espionage bureau. They bought the most modern tools and with their

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